

Regional Development Organizations Have Staying Power

During the past 40 years, regional organizations have expanded their funding and enhanced their menu of services and programs to meet local, state and federal needs. The ultimate goal remains the same to help local governments in their regions define and meet their common needs through inclusive and coordinated program planning and implementation.

Today, regional development organizations are multi-functional, multi-jurisdictional planning and development agencies that provide assistance to local governments, businesses and nonprofit organizations. Most receive funding for an array of programs from federal, state, local and private sources. Programs vary by region and reflect local priorities.

These regional organizations are created as governmental units or nonprofit public and private institutions. In some states, they are created by state legislation, in others by executive order or local agreements. While a few have taxing authority, most are dependent on federal, state and local grants, contracts and service fees.

In 2000, the NADO Research Foundation conducted a survey of regional development organizations and received information from 292 regions in 48 states. The NADO survey revealed that the typical regional development organization was founded in 1969, serves a population of 220,000 in six counties and 33 cities and towns, has 16 employees and a budget between \$1 million and 1.5 million.

Source: *Economic Development Digest, February/March 2001*